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Prohibition of Reference to Overcrowding Draft Proposal for an International Convention

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Preamble

It can be readily argued that many conventional crises are a consequence of increasing population -- unemployment, environmental degradation, access to food and water resources, failing social security services, disease, inaccessibility of education, refugees, security threats, violence, waste, and the like. Such arguments derive primarily from marginal groups and are readily deprecated. Their presentation however introduces a further destabilizing dynamic into societies already faced with instability and the challenge of achieving sustainability.

It follows that any reference to overpopulation is highly controversial and divisive. This pattern has already been recognized to a degree and has given rise to informal measures to restrict reference to the challenge of overpopulation wherever possible. It justifies the prohibition previously envisaged (*Prohibition of Reference to Overpopulation of the Planet Draft: Proposal for an international convention*, 2018).

Reference to any "planetary" implications of overpopulation is also of questionable value. Comprehension of the planet as a whole is an abstraction with which few can engage meaningfully in their daily lives, including those with policy-making mandates. So framed, "overpopulation" is also an abstraction with little meaningful relevance to the concrete realities of daily life. As a consequence, arguments for family planning and birth control may well be interpreted as a highly suspect subterfuge in support of other agendas.

Such argument can be extended to [crowding](#), as may well be widely experienced by many in daily life -- whether or not the crowding is framed as excessive, namely as "overcrowding". Crowding is far more concrete and far less controversial. Such references are not constrained by the strictures of religion. As an essentially "local" experience meaningful to many, overcrowding can be usefully contrasted with overpopulation as an elusive "global" abstraction meaningful only to the few.

As with overpopulation, reference to overcrowding may also merit prohibition in societies which are obliged to adapt to ever increasing numbers and may welcome that increase -- or experience it as natural. To the extent that population increase is a politically sensitive issue -- if recognized at all -- it cannot be appropriately challenged. Reference to overcrowding as a "local" surrogate or proxy is therefore in itself problematic, given the need for individuals, communities and societies to adapt proactively to that experience.

It is however totally inappropriate, and unnecessarily provocative, to imply that there is any reasonable limit to increase in [population density](#) -- especially given the many areas of the planet which are held to be underpopulated, and despite the threats of global warming to their habitability (*List of countries and dependencies by population density*, *Wikipedia*; *List of cities by population density*, *Wikipedia*).

Recognizing:

1. **Religion:** The scriptures and spiritual teachings of the major religions of the world make no reference to the problematic consequences of overcrowding and indeed are consistent with the formulation favoured by the Abrahamic religions: *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1-28)*. With that mandate, religions are consequently appropriately encouraged to promote the birth rates of their adherents and those they aspire to convert. Constraint on population growth is therefore legitimately held to be tantamount to blasphemy, and therefore to be sanctioned accordingly. It follows that reference to overcrowding is best avoided in that it may imply the need for some such constraint.
2. **Labour requirements:** The aging populations of developed countries call for a sustained approach to increasing their numbers, whether to provide essential labour for business and other services currently unable to fill vacant positions, or to ensure care for the increasing proportion of the elderly. Such requirements notably extend to the military and security services in anticipation of future social unrest. Reference to any consequential overcrowding can therefore be usefully avoided.
3. **Need for consumers:** Economies and business enterprises, dependent for their health on continuous growth and market development, have a fundamental need for an expanding pool of consumers. To the extent that this is associated with some form of overcrowding, highlighting this phenomenon undermines the fundamental requirement for continuing growth in population.
4. **Human rights:** Reproduction is a fundamental human right which it is totally inappropriate to call into question in any way. Any

reference to overcrowding can therefore be usefully avoided through its implication that this could lead to a call for a constraint on reproductive rights. It is inappropriate to endeavour to demonstrate that excessive population density is in any way a constraint on human rights.

5. **Discrimination:** Any suggestion that increase in population should be constrained, especially in underprivileged countries with a high birth rate, is fundamentally discriminatory. Suggestions to the contrary recall the imperial abuses of colonialism, if not the more extreme ideologies of fascism and eugenics -- especially when proposed constraints impact most on the poorest segments of the population. References to any experience of excessive crowding are therefore usefully avoided.
6. **Culture:** Individuals in many cultures, notably those with the highest birth rates, tend to associate their identity, self-esteem and status with larger families -- the larger the better. Constraints on reproduction are therefore an inappropriate criticism of modalities to which fundamental significance is attached. They merit recognition as a form of cultural violence. Any reference to excessive crowding should therefore be discouraged and carefully avoided.
7. **Politics:** Political ideologies and platforms responsive to the "will of the people", and the pressures for re-election, must necessarily reflect the need for population increase in their policies, however implicitly -- especially those with a populist bias. Any sense that such policies will result in excessive crowding are therefore politically unproductive.
8. **Humanitarian:** The condition of those in extremely deprived circumstances evokes a healthy global caring response, a valuable dimension of the global conscience, which would otherwise be inhibited. Any implication, through reference to excessive crowding, that further deprivation will result should therefore be carefully avoided.
9. **Collective learning:** Given the undeclared commitment to unconstrained increase in population, and the associated overcrowding, it is clearly appropriate to allow the trend to evoke whatever consequences will enable new dimensions of collective learning appropriate to that situation. Increasing probability of system failures as a consequence of overcrowding should be carefully ignored -- as with any implication of reduced coping capacity of governance.

Noting:

1. Arguments have already been well-developed with respect to the problematic consequences of overpopulation (of which overcrowding can be inferred to be a characteristic). These endeavour to demonstrate that both are myth -- even a dangerous myth -- unsubstantiated by any adequate evidence and readily associated with vested interests and their questionable agendas. In particular, however, there is no solid evidence establishing that overcrowding is a consequence of overpopulation or a credible indicator of it.
2. Although unconstrained reproduction is a fundamental human right, as implied by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), it is completely inappropriate to draw inferences to the contrary, with regard to overcrowding, from the fact that the global population was 2.4 billion at that time, whereas 50 years later it is now 7.6 billion, and is predicted to be between 10 and 13 billion by the end of the century.
3. Authorities, notably at the regional or international level, already cultivate implicit internal policies to avoid reference to excessive crowding and its consequences -- whether or not this is also clarified in guidelines of any form.
4. Mass media, whether local, national or international, already avoid reference to the wider or longer term implications of excessive crowding and its consequences -- whether as a result of pressure from political sponsors, funders, advertisers, lobbies, readership, or recommendations from government -- however articulated.
5. Research through think tanks and academic institutions already carefully avoids more than passing reference to population growth and to any consequential overcrowding (*Confronting the Global Forced Migration Crisis*, May 2018). This has been notably relevant in relation to climate change through the appropriately selective consideration of that dimension in the *Kaya Identity (Introduction. In Climate Change 2007: Mitigation. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC)*. This crafting of concern contrasts with that of the early study for the Club of Rome, now to be deemed completely irresponsible (Paul Ratner. *In 1973, an MIT computer predicted the end of civilization: so far, it's on target*, *Big Think*, 23 August 2018).
6. Funding agencies are already assiduous in avoiding any assistance to programs of research or aid which can be interpreted as a controversial constraint on birth rates, notably as this might be concluded from any understanding of crowding as excessive.
7. Undertaking initiatives in favour of constraints on overcrowding is already recognized as guaranteed to undermine opportunities for institutional development, as well as for the individual career advancement of those associated with that process
8. Governments and other institutions faced with a variety of pressing challenges are already resigned to the fact that increasing levels of crowding are a reality to be accepted -- and about which nothing effective can be appropriately done. References to its cumulative consequence as "overcrowding" are therefore avoided. This sense of reality includes the recognition that pressures on migration from countries with high birth rates will be unstoppable for the foreseeable future because of the disadvantageous conditions experienced there. The flow of migrants will in all probability continue to increase although reference to this is avoided.
9. Governments and funding agencies already have a marked tendency to withdraw support from institutions highlighting issues relating to overcrowding and birth control. Increasingly these take the form of measures effectively to be recognized as sanctions on such initiatives.
10. Challenges to the governability of societies are widely experienced as a consequence of their increasing complexity and the variety of disruptive processes. It is however completely inappropriate to suggest that overcrowding exacerbates ungovernability in any manner.

Agreement by Signatory States:

1. **Religions** should not be subject in any way to criticism for their promotion of larger families, opposition to abortion or birth control -- and to natalism, especially when faced with pressures from other religions. Overcrowding should not be framed as a consequence of the intransigence of religions regarding constraints on population growth.

2. **Political programs** should avoid any reference to overcrowding as a constraint on the implementation of their policies towards full employment, economic growth, security, and sustainability -- whether in the short term or the longer term. Excessive crowding, if it results from such policies, should be welcomed. If framed as distinct policy challenge, it should not be systemically related to population growth. In responding to future labour requirements, any reference to overcrowding should therefore be constrained. Concern with any association between overcrowding and unemployment should be carefully ignored, whatever the evidence cited to the contrary.
3. **Business corporations** should in no way be subject to sanctions for strategies encouraging larger families as a means of ensuring both market development and the labour force to meet the resulting needs for production. To respond to that growing need for consumers and labour, any reference to overcrowding should therefore be carefully constrained and reframed. Businesses should be encouraged to frame any crowding, experienced as excessive, as inviting technical innovation -- namely as a business opportunity.
4. **Advocacy groups** condemning overcrowding in any form should be strongly discouraged by whatever means possible, if not prohibited. As with disruptive political ideologies, apologists for such perspectives should be similarly constrained. Any reference to crowding, as a consequence of population increase, should therefore be specifically avoided.
5. **Research**, notably through think tanks, should avoid including excessive crowding (as a consequence of population growth) as a factor for consideration in elaborating fruitful strategic policies for consideration by government. Foresight studies and statistical reporting should minimize reference to future population growth and consequences that might result from it -- most notably with respect to overcrowding (notably as a consequence of migration).
6. **Documentation systems** and libraries should reclassify or withdraw materials on any challenges explicitly framed as arising from overcrowding -- treating them as is done with highly controversial and deprecated themes (fascism, pornography, blasphemy, and the like). Publishers should be strongly discouraged from producing materials reflecting this questionable concern. The promotion of materials highlighting the merits of crowding should be encouraged.
7. **Media** and search engines should subject materials referring to overcrowding to the patterns of censorship already in place, or envisaged with respect to misleading advertising and fake news. Presentations promoting the merits of crowding should be encouraged. Media should be encouraged to avoid comparison of widely expressed concerns regarding **prison overcrowding** with conditions on the planet -- too readily framed metaphorically as a prison.
8. **Entertainment** and comedy should be strongly discouraged from making reference to crowding as a matter of concern rather than as a characteristic of communal living and enhanced quality of life to be welcomed.
9. **Legislation** should be envisaged at the national, regional or international level to provide a formal framework for prohibition of problematic references to crowding.
10. **Withdrawal of accreditation** and appropriate sanctions should be envisaged in the event of failure to respect these strategic principles. Beyond the conventional use of injunctions, consideration should be given to the use of superinjunctions to reduce attention to these provisions in order to avoid exacerbation of global insecurity.

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